
Book Reviews

Review

A. Mitchell Orenstein, Stephen Bloom, Nicole Lindstrom (eds.)

Transnational Actors in Central and East European Transitions

University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008

The key question this volume is addressing concerns the role of transnational actors in processes of democratisation in post-communist Europe which, according to the editors, is ‘the dark matter that held the various aspects of post-communist transition together in Central and East Europe’ (2008, 6). The authors represented in this volume, as well as the editors, are scholars that have already made important contributions to the study of post-communism. This makes the task of reviewing this compilation rather unrewarding since I can only briefly touch upon individual contributions. However, since the purpose of this edited volume is to pull together and contrast these various contributions in hope of providing some new insights, this is what I will try to do as well. I will first briefly overview the texts in the volume in order to provide basic information for prospective readers, and then consider the contribution of the volume as a whole.

The editors divide authors’ contributions in two groups: the first one comprises authors who study the ways in which transnational actors exert influence, where we find M.A. Vachudova, N. Lindstrom, W. Jacoby, J. Johnson, and R. A. Epstein. The second group contains contributions which attempt to evaluate the impact of external influences, where we find authors who are critical of the role of transnational actors: T. A. Byrnes, R. Hislope, D. Ost, and M. D. Kennedy.

The opening text of the first group is Milada Anna Vachudova’s one on the European Union’s influence in post-communist transitions. Vachudova reiterates the main argument from her book *Europe Undivided* (2005), where she conceptualised the EU influence as active and passive leverage. Passive leverage is the attraction of EU membership, while active leverage refers to the accession process of complying with membership criteria. In analysing country cases, her key argument is that the prospect of EU membership created incentives for previously illiberal parties to adjust their agendas towards EU requirements, which by extension means that the EU had an important democratisation impact in reluctant new democracies such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.

Nicole Lindstrom relies on Peter A. Hall’s (1993) concept of *policy paradigms* as collective understandings that underpin interests and preferences in her analysis of anti-trafficking policy in the Balkans. She argues that different transnational actors frame and address the issue of trafficking within discourses of migration, law enforcement, human rights and economic conditions, and that the available policy solutions are the result of these framings. Since the EU and the US are the strongest actors in the Balkans, their respective framings of anti-trafficking policies within discourses of migration and law-enforcement prevail, while the author advocates a more

development-oriented approach to this problem. Next, in his text for this volume, Wade Jacoby restates his 'coalition approach', developed originally in a review article in *World Politics* (Jacoby, 2006). According to his concept, outsiders gain influence within a domestic political setting by strengthening like-minded insiders. The key prerequisite in this conceptualisation of external influence is the existence of domestic factions or 'minority traditions' that outsiders can work with. He provides a specific 'how' for the question of transnational actors' influence, and tries to avoid the type of 'either-or' reasoning of domestic and international politics. Finally, in his account transnational actors are not always successful, but in those cases when they are, they are at the same time most difficult to analytically distinguish because they are bound up with domestic politics.

Juliet Johnson's text analyses central bankers in post-communist countries as an epistemic community that have been socialised into sharing an ideology of price stability and political independence. In the post-communist context this ideology was intensively shared by central banks, but less so by their broader domestic environments, and Johnson analyses this process of two-track diffusion in post-communist settings. Along similar lines on the role of international doctrines, Rachel A. Epstein writes about how new democracies of Central and East Europe embraced the market more vigorously than older European states, which, among other things, resulted in historically unprecedented levels of foreign ownership of financial institutions in post-communist countries (usually over 70 per cent). In an argument she further developed in her book *In Pursuit of Liberalism: International Institutions in Post-communist Europe* (2008), she argues that openness to foreign advisers allowed international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to frame the debate in favour of privatization and foreign investment over national security and development concerns. The variation in foreign bank ownership across post-communist countries depended, according to Epstein, largely on how successfully transnational actors managed to mobilise domestic actors around their cause. This is an argument that echoes Jacoby's coalition approach about the cooperation of external and domestic actors in pushing forward specific policy solutions.

Timothy A. Byrnes' text on the role of the Catholic Church opens the second group of texts in this volume. He considers the political influence of Pope John Paul II as a Polish European at the head of a transnational institution par excellence – the Catholic Church – in the European integration of East European countries. Since the Catholic Church is rarely encountered in these types of analyses, this text is an interesting read with some valuable propositions that I cannot go into here, including that on the role of Pope John Paul II in the nationalist movement in Croatia. The key argument the author is making is that despite of its transnational structure and appeal, the Catholic Church's message typically gets mediated by national agendas and fails to transform national divisions. Robert Hislope analyses FYR Macedonia as an instance of a divided society, questioning the validity of anti-corruption rhetoric that conceptualises corruption as a purely negative phenomenon. According to his argument, in ethnically divided societies where corruption works across ethnic lines, it may tame the destructive impulses of nationalism, and the anti-corruption platform of the international community might be undermining a precarious balance of peace.

The last two texts in the volume fall squarely into international relations studies; both authors promote the view according to which it is big states, rather than transnational actors, that determine the trajectory of change in post-communist countries. While David Ost analyses Poland's political balancing between the EU and the US on the issues of European integration and the war against Iraq, Michael D. Kennedy moves the debate into analysis of energy and security preferences of Russia and the

US as key powers in post-communist countries. He proposes that control over major energy resources that enable economic development is an important driver of alliances and development trajectories of post-communist countries that have been neglected in transition literature.

Let me now address the propositions the editors make about the purpose and aims of this book on the influence of transnational actors in post-communist countries. They claim several contributions of this volume to the field of post-communist studies. Firstly, they propose that the analysis of external factors of democratisation adds a fourth dimension to transition studies – making for a ‘quadruple transition’. Post-communist transitions were initially conceptualised as dual transitions, involving a transition to liberal democracy and market capitalism (Przeworski 1991), until Offe (1997) added a third dimension to these transitions by considering the fact that post-communist states were involved in nation- and state-building. Orenstein, Bloom and Lindstrom in this volume argue that adding the influence of transnational actors to the study of post-communist transition adds a fourth dimension to the analytical framework. However, this fourth dimension has been claimed before, among others by Grzegorz Ekiert analysing social change from state socialism to pluralist democracy, so it seems unclear really how many dimensions we are working with (all is well as long as the Fifth element is not introduced, we might say, since that would probably be taking it a bit too far).

Notwithstanding the unfortunate piling up of dimensions, the key claim the editors are making stands: post-communist scholarship ought to be able to better integrate the influence of external factors on domestic change, and this volume is a successful contribution to this effort. The editors have compiled contributions from authors that have recently made influential propositions regarding external influence on democratisation of post-communist countries and as a result it contains key arguments in a neatly summarised fashion, and juxtaposed to each other for easier evaluation by the reader. In that respect this volume might serve as a starting point for anyone who is either beginning their study or simply needs a reliable overview of this field. For those more interested, it will suffice to follow up on the provided references in order to get a good grasp of the current state of the art in this literature.

This volume offers a wider conceptualisation of transnational actors than is usually common. Most studies of international factors in post-communist transitions consider primarily the EU, and after that NATO, the Council of Europe, and financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. As has been shown in the brief overview above, the texts in this volume incorporate various other types of transnational actors such as epistemic communities (central bankers), the Catholic Church, global big powers (Russia, the USA), international NGOs such as Transparency International and the International Crisis Group, and others. This diversity of potential outside actors in domestic democratisation processes of new democracies is truly refreshing and widens our analytical perspective.

Next, the editors emphasise the fact that this compilation does not side with either the constructivist or the rationalist camp, but instead promotes authors that advocate either one or the other approach, with some authors trying to bridge the divide. While the dichotomy of ideas versus interests is one of those basic puzzles in comparative politics that will hardly ever be decided in favour of one option, some authors in this volume, such as Johnson and Jacoby, seem to walk the line rather successfully by acknowledging the role of ideas and at the same time keeping their eye firmly on strategic behaviour and interest-driven politics. If we are interested in explaining democratisation developments, I would propose that we need to make sure

we are focusing on political consequences of the actors' actions, while an analysis of the ideas which frame the problems and solutions will enable us to shed light on the motives and 'cognitive horizons' of the actors in question. In other words, if we are animated by the 'why' question, we need insight into both ideas and interests, and some of the texts in this volume do this successfully.

Finally, Orenstein, Bloom and Lindstrom propose that this volume represents a new trend in disciplinary terms, ushering studies of transnational politics that collapse the boundaries between international relations and comparative politics. According to the editors, this new transnational scholarship challenges the notion that there are one or two global trends transforming politics globally. Instead, it emphasises multiple trends, and it focuses on a much wider spectrum of actors, including various non-state actors. Furthermore, transnational scholarship integrates the insight of changing models of governance, which are moving away from hierarchical and territorial into more networked forms of international, and it draws from both constructivist and rationalist theoretical frameworks. To what extent is this intention fulfilled? This edited volume successfully shows the diversity of international and transnational actors that had a stake in the democratisation of post-communist countries, which is valuable for everyone interested in this field of study. However, as it usually is with a collection of texts, they do not engage in conversation much. Alongside the grouping of texts that the editors propose, I would suggest the authors also group into those who focus on specific policy areas and draw conclusions from there (Lindstrom, Johnson, Epstein, Hislope), those who are trying to identify causal mechanisms from a more mid-level theoretical position (Vachudova, Jacoby, Byrnes) and then those who speak from the international relations tradition of evaluating states' preferences and strategic behaviour (Ost, Kennedy). In summary, the strength of this volume is in that it collects good scholarship on the subject of external influences on democratisation in post-communist countries. The editors have made a pick of some of the most promising avenues in this research which merit further exploration and therefore this book should find its place on the shelves of everyone interested in post-communist studies.

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Book Review

Goran Gretić

Philosophy and the Idea of Europe
(*Filozofija i ideja Europe*)

Breza, Zagreb, 2008, 323 pages

The author of this book, a professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, has been developing a philosophical approach to the idea of Europe for many years now. Goran Gretić's primary concern is the critical analysis of Kant's and Husserl's contribution to this topic, but he also analyzes the work of many other authors who have contributed to the philosophical idea of Europe, and especially of an understanding of Europe as a *sui generis* entity open for something different and 'Other'.

In the introductory part, called '*Philosophy as self-consciousness of liberty*' the author, starting from the analysis of the genealogy of Hegel's ideas of philosophy and freedom, concludes that although the relationship between a certain nation and philosophy has a variety of meanings, it has not been a subject of philosophical reflection. A philosophy of a nation is free and unique, it cannot be calculated, and it is the task of philosophy to make a statement about the 'spiritual situation of a certain time', in our case about a civilization characterized by science and technology.

The first part, entitled *The Raise of Nation*, and its subsection *About Fichte's philosophy of national* reminds the reader of ideas first developed by Aristotle. It is the idea of the priority of the whole, which is later complemented with the philosophical discourse on community, the theological one by Tomas Aquinas, natural-philosophical by G. Bruno and by

the founder of the idea of national, J.G. Fichte. Fichte has developed the dynamic concept of nation; he was contemplating about the freedom of the individual, and pointing to the connection between education and the development of national consciousness. Gretić transcends this 'totalitarian' idea of nurture and education to the possibility of universal understanding of peace among different countries and their peoples as essential maxim *pro future*.

Through the works of Alberto Bazala, Gretić is analysing the Croatian philosophical tradition of the idea of *the national*. Bazala adopts the idea of *the national* from the works of his mentor, F. Marković who thought that only philosophy, coupled with widespread education, can build 'the self-consciousness of a people'. The author analyses this social development, which is conditioned by endogenous factors, within the context of its time. Bazala's initiative for the establishment of a People's University (*Pučko sveučilište*), at which he worked and promoted the cultural-educational values, had a great role in the enlightenment of the city of Zagreb but also Croatia as a whole. The role of philosophy in the life of the people can also be found in the works of S. Zimmerman and his contributions to the 'spirit of the people'. In philosophy, Bazala sees a moving force, a 'genius inspection' from which he deducts his ontology of human *being* (*das Sein*) which seeks a historical consciousness as an encouragement to the *national being*.

In Kant's *Perpetual Peace* which marks a victory for a rational organization of society, a lawful peace is called for, a peace that emerges from natural tendencies. The author is analyzing Kant's work, and also grasps the problem of the political thought of Modernity by analysing Kant's statements on 'justifying' revolution and war. In the chapter *Pax kantiana and Hegel's critique*, the author points to a misunderstanding of Hegel, as an apologist of war, and con-

cludes that these two authors even had similar views on justification of war, and he goes on to analyze the similarities between them.

The chapter entitled *Peace in Philosophy and among Nations* continues in the matters of Kant's theoretical philosophy, to which the author refers as "the road of reason". Man is determined by free will, and Kant attributes to freedom the moral qualifications depending on the manner in which the man uses it. The concept of peace points out to the actuality of Kant's philosophy, for it was precisely him who attributed to it the status of basic philosophical term, and thus peace remains 'eternal' as an idea. The author analyses the notion of peace through the works of the world's greatest thinkers, and illustrates how the term is perceived in the Western tradition. The royal peoples ruling by the laws of equality, the author stresses, shall listen to the maxims of the philosophers in order to realize the possibility for public peace.

The freedom of the subject and freedom as coexistence within a community is interpreted by a reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which for its subject-matter has the idea, the concept of law, and its actualization. The author, much like Hegel, engages in a debate with political philosophers of both antiquity and modernity, in order to show how the modern state was founded as a complex political community. The common life in freedom is thus perceived as a state-community which, through the idea of the good, captures the unity of free citizens.

In the chapter *The Idea of Europe as a Community of Wisdom* (subtitled *The Reconstruction of Husserl's understanding of European Culture*), the author demonstrates the importance of Husserl's work for understanding the role and the task of natural and social sciences in the development of European culture. He spotted the crisis of philosophy and science, and attempted, through theoretical

difference of natural and spiritual sciences, to provide a solution to the existing crisis. For him, the defense of philosophy is at the same time the defense of each individual science, and the philosophy can, through awakening its strength, overcome the contemporary malady of culture. The life of Europe is guided through the ideal of scientific rationality developed in Greece, and the whole of the European culture has been seen as "forgetfulness of its own source". The mentioned oblivion exists for as long as the sciences are separated from philosophy. The author labels Husserl's philosophy of crisis as a voluntaristic conception, because the crisis is considered to be dependent on the will, its strength or weakness.

Europe as the Homeland of Memory is the subtitle of a chapter explaining the idea of Europe as eccentric, disputable, Athenian, Jerusalem, Homeric, a Europe with a secretive origin. The author considers the paradoxical European heritage to be a peculiar "synthesis of the Jewish religion, Greek philosophy and science as well as Christianity." Europe is the West, which appears towards the East as the "Other" or "the axiom of difference", as Derrida has labeled the European. The problem of Croatian identity is critically analyzed through the works of the 'local' philosophers Albert Bazala and Franjo Marković, and he provides the basic principles and understandings of their time.

The chapter entitled *Hannah Arendt and Kant focuses on the problem of judgment*. H. Arendt, from a perspective of her theory about the crisis of modernity, looks at the faculty of judgment in the context of rethinking human activities, and evaluates the changes of social conditions related to the faculty of judgment. She also concludes that the notion of the faculty of judgment has become a topic and an issue only with Kant, but within the framework of difficulties in perceiving the totalitarian rule. Arendt's starting point is, the author states, that

Kant's political philosophy is gathered in his *Critique of Judgment*. Gretić concludes that Arendt has also had significant influence on the scientific circle of Habermas, through political philosophy and discursive ethics, and that she, as a thinker of "modernity" pointed out to the chances and dangers, questions and answers that the faculty of judgment can offer in the context of the crisis of modernity.

Arguing for a theory of good life, as well as rethinking the relation between philosophy and politics, Gretić makes a challenging attempt to compare the thought of H. Arendt to the one of her teacher, M. Heidegger. The author wishes to interpret one predominantly systemic problem of the relation between thinking and acting, philosophy and politics, giving an overview of their life and work, in different periods of their life and work.

Heidegger's Critique of Technology and the Crisis of Modernity is the last chapter, in which the author reflects back on Heidegger's relation towards the technical civilization, presented in his later works. Contemplating on the final manifestation of metaphysics, the author finds that the scientific-technological civilization has, as its foundational characteristic, the ruling of the world and technical production. The abolition of such an approach is impossible to the being, but it is possible to limit the absolute demand of technology regarding us through a "turn in thinking". Through such a limitation, a new possibility of self-discovery of the *being* is provided, with the man creating in himself such a precondition

At the end, several things deserve yet to be noted. The book is bound to be a significant contribution to the understanding of philosophy originating from the rethinking of modern existence, which is particularly visible from the various interpretations and understandings of the relation between politics and philosophy. The author searches, over

and over again, for new paths, at the same time remaining faithful to the tradition of Western political thought, and it is precisely this fact that makes for one of the greatest achievements of his book. We must, however, not forget the intention of its author – to bring out the relevance of Croatian philosophy and Croatian philosophers. It is the overall treatment and placing of their work into the context of European philosophical thought, which has been lacking so far. It seems indeed that we are in need of, at least within the field of philosophy, a portion of "revisionism", so that certain authors could at last gain the attention they have long deserved.

(Translated from Croatian by
Tamara Kolarić and Daniela Širinić)

Ivana Milan

Book Review

Vladimir Vujčić

Kultura i politika (*Culture and Politics*)

Politička kultura, Zagreb, 2008, 419 pages

Vladimir Vujčić, a professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, best known for his work in political culture and education, provides in *Culture and Politics* a comprehensive critical account of recent research in political culture that stresses the importance of culture for politics. Vujčić begins by presuming three distinctive approaches to politics: institutionalism, rational choice and culture, each of which deals with a separate determinant of politics: institutions, interests and identity. In this book he is focused on the cultural approach to politics and is trying to define "culture"

as an independent variable for explaining a society's political development in a comparative perspective.

Vujčić tries a great deal to build up a systematic understanding of culture, drawing from Clifford Geertz's notion of culture as a system that provides meaning, a choice of identities and values, and is thus residual to institutions and rational choice as the other two approaches to politics. Elites provide ideologies, but at the individual level both ideologies and rational choices are filtered through orientations, general dispositions given by a culture. This is why it is impossible to achieve linear modernization of a society, or achieve social change solely by imposing new ideologies or spurring economic development. According to Vujčić, the notion of linearity is still difficult to avoid in political theory: even R. Inglehart and C. Welzel, the authors whose research he widely discusses and respects, fall into the trap of T. Parsons' causal and functional analysis, disregarding logical and semantic aspects of culture and thus failing to explain numerous aspects of social change, as well as all the different ways in which democracies are developed throughout the world.

He turns next to nationalism and the importance of the nation state – in his and the words of the scientists he quotes – a community based on a common identity, including language and culture, rather than common values. In a multicultural society, the community obviously has to be based on something else, but Vujčić rejects the idea of an universal citizenship as a basis of a community: according to him, this is too abstract a notion to be emotionally binding, and every society needs to find its own answer to the problem, its specific balance between several different or even opposed doctrines. In the same line of reasoning, he rejects the much discussed demise of the nation state: because identities are always already formed by a specific culture, one necessarily belongs to a

specific political community, which is thus a prerequisite for all other units of political systems and usually forms itself in a nation state. Since there is no democracy without a nation state, supranational organizations necessarily tend towards bureaucratization at the expense of democratic decision making, a process readily visible in the current state of the EU politics.

If there is no democracy without a nation state, is the nation state then a *sine qua non* of effective democracy? Here Vujčić quotes the famous World Values Survey of Inglehart and Welzel who found that democracies that “work” are always connected with human development and the degree in which expressive change in values is spread throughout a community. The important values include support towards political activism, tolerance of homosexuality and a feeling of trust towards others. The core value in this sense seems to be the appreciation of human freedom. According to the available data, the predominant values of Croatian citizens are not entirely supportive of a full-fledged democracy and Croatia has, according to Vujčić, yet to see a true societal change. Inglehart and Welzel have found that economic progress usually brings about the necessary changes, but Vujčić warns that neither economic progress nor the mentioned change in values account for all the variance in existing democracies: more research, especially cultural research, is needed.

This is followed by a discussion of political tolerance, foreshadowed by mentioning the German cultural identity which, according to him is, although based on cultural differentiation and thus often considered retrograde in comparison with the French assimilation model, better equipped to deal with the problems of multicultural citizenship. Vujčić together with R. Weisseberg rejects the idea of tolerance as “acceptance of everything”. He presents the results of his research of tolerance among Croatian

college students, which established that the degree of tolerance can be higher than the degree of respect towards civil freedoms. In light of postmodern theories he labels this type of tolerance excessive, and concludes that tolerance has to be determined by values shared by a community: boundless tolerance is simply pointless. Ironically, when reading discussions of the research, one often finds his explanation of phenomena in Croatian society overtly determined by theories which fail to account for cultural specifics. This could be simply scientific rigor, but still it is difficult not to ask if the observed lack of faith in political institutions is really connected with cosmopolitan trends, and if excessive tolerance is not a sign of something other than acceptance of the postmodern lack of moral values.

The last part of the book deals with political education – for Vujčić, a term that includes civics and education for democracy as its sub-fields. Already it is obvious that, if democracy depended directly on the values shared by the citizens, and if those values are acquired through socialization, education is of primary importance in the establishment of a truly democratic society. In Vujčić's view, the education has to specifically address deliberative democracy as understood by J. Habermas and J. Rawls, because of the emphasis it places on the actions the citizens take in order to achieve freedom, equality and justice in their society. At the core of this notion is the desire to pursue one's selfish interest while still striving towards the common good and the common goals of a society. This cannot be achieved without installing virtues from an early age, and it is a task of educators to raise citizens who will not be free riders in a free society.

The book ends with the results of Vujčić's research among Croatian high school students, partly conducted within the 2002 IAE Civic Education Study. The research shows that civic identity and interest for politics among Croatian

students are less strong than expected in a developed democracy. Although they highly respect human rights, they exhibit the tolerance paradox observed throughout the world – high respect for the universality of human rights combined with a denial of those rights for the groups they disagree with. Finally, only 56% hold that democracy is the best form of government, which is a belief almost universal in most countries. While the goal of education is not to advocate democracy above everything else, concludes Vujčić, some form of politics in schools is necessary to avoid confusion visible among Croatian students and promote them into participating citizens.

Culture and Politics is a voluminous book, and since parts of the book have already been published in journals, it contains redundancies and its chapters are only loosely connected by the overarching topic. At places, the book reads like an edited volume rather than a consistent development of a single thesis. Still, it gives the Croatian reader a valuable and comprehensive guide to the growing literature that comprises a new and exciting topic for political science. *Culture and Politics* will therefore become a mandatory reading for every student and researcher of politics.

Durđica Dragojević

Review

Zdravko Petak (ed.)

Stranke i javne politike. Izbori u Hrvatskoj 2007.
(*Parties and Public Policies. 2007 Elections in Croatia*)

Fakultet političkih znanosti, Zagreb,
2009, 268 pages

Policy analysis and comparative public policies are young disciplines in Croatia. While political science was established in Croatia in the mid sixties, based on disciplines such as political theory and institutional analysis, first policy studies were published in the late eighties. After the regime change policy analysis gained momentum in the nineties, but only since 2000 the field has attracted numerous young researchers who explore a variety of topics dealing with comparative public policies. Evidence for this recent flourishing of policy research is also this volume edited by Zdravko Petak, focusing on political parties and public policies. While Petak is an eminent Croatian expert on public policies and one of the pioneers in this field, all other contributors in the volume belong to the younger generation of Croatian political scientists, who work either at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb or at other academic institutions in Croatia and abroad.

The volume consists of seven studies, of which four deal with the main topic of the volume, the connection between electoral competition among Croatian parties and public policies, whereby empirical data in the studies are mainly related to the 2007 parliamentary elections. The editor of the volume, Zdravko Petak, in his study on "Economic policy and political parties: between equality and economic growth" summarizes a long

debate in political science on the question whether economic policies in contemporary advanced capitalist states are shaped by programmes of the governing left and right parties. Petak argues that while the initial model of party competition, which dominated the research in the fifties and sixties, was determined by Anthony Downs' median voter hypothesis which drives left and right concepts of economic policy towards the centre, a different tradition was established by Douglas Hibbs in the late seventies, whose party differences model of economic policy-making tried to show that significant differences between left and right concepts of economic policy are rooted in conflicting interests of constituencies which they represent. A competing model, proposed by Francis Castles, denied the importance of party competition for policy-making and tried to demonstrate that there are different national patterns of economic and social policies, based on cultural and historic features of various countries. Petak concludes that the recent processes of globalization and Europeanization narrow the space for different party-based or national models of economic policy-making. Petak offers a well-informed portrayal of the debate about the sources of different models of economic policy. It is, however, pity that he did not include in his overview the debate on the question "do parties matter?" – represented by authors such as Harold Wilensky, Hans Keman and Manfred G. Schmidt – in which it was ultimately shown that different patterns of left and right economic and social policies still exist.

In one of the most interesting studies in the volume Danijela Dolenc, assistant researcher at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, deals with the supply and demand of public policies in the 2007 elections. On the supply side she analyzes the electoral programmes as well as campaign messages of the two main Croatian parties, centre-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and centre-left Social Democratic Party (SDP),

concerning the models of public policies they offer. She concludes that there were no major differences in the programmes, and that certain recognizable political differences became evident only during the campaign. The similarities of proposed policy-concepts correspond to the prevailing expectations of Croatian voters, who wish strong state interventionism in economic and social policy-making. The differences between HDZ and SDP were articulated in other policy-fields and were based on different ideological party positions on issues such as religious education in public schools, dealing with the communist past, legal regulation of working time on Sundays and anti-drug policy. Dolenec concludes that the fact that two main Croatian parties do not offer different models of economic and social policy, but compete on ideological issues, is not a sign of political under-development, but rather in line with recent developments in some advanced Western democracies.

Krešimir Petković, assistant at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, in his comprehensive study on “Symbolic vs. referential politics: failure of public policies in the 2007 parliamentary elections” offers a similar analysis of the quality of the electoral policy-programmes formulated by the Croatian parties. His study is based on Murray Edelman’s early theory which distinguishes between referential and symbolic politics: while the first is concerned with rational policy-models, the second is based on mobilizing emotions by political symbols. His detailed analysis shows that Croatian parties were not able to offer consistent policy-packages which could be recognized by voters as clearly distinguished from each other. Rather, political programmes and campaigning – as could be expected – relied on ideologically loaded symbols and discourses. Petković concludes – very much in line with the arguments of Petak and Dolenec, who observe the dominant tendency towards uniform policy-programmes among European parties – that Croatian politics has

been normalized after the turbulent decade of state-building and national mobilization and that the space for policy-competition has been narrowly defined by the process of Europeanization of Croatian politics.

The fate of two complex policy fields in the Croatian party competition during 2007 elections is analyzed by the next two studies: Dagmar Radin (assistant professor at the Mississippi State University) and Aleksandar Džakula (research assistant at the medical school “Andrija Štampar” in Zagreb) deal with health policies, while Vedrana Baričević and Viktor Koska (both assistants at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb) discuss educational policy concepts in electoral programmes 2007. The findings of both studies are very similar: although there is a general attitude that health and education are important public goods, health and education policies are too complex to be dealt with by Croatian parties and voters in the elections. The authors think, however, that this should not necessarily be so: electoral programmes and campaigns in the USA and in some European countries have successfully dealt with health and educational policies, thus adding substance to electoral choices.

The two last contributions diverge from the prevailing topic of the volume: they explore certain institutional and socio-cultural framework conditions for policy-making. Marina Škrabalo, doctoral student of comparative politics, analyzes the role of the Croatian parliament in the process of negotiating the Croatian accession to the European Union. She looks into the traditional range of parliamentary functions, from legislation to scrutiny and deliberation, on the basis of empirical data about plenary and committee activities of the Croatian parliament since 2001, when the EU accession process started. Škrabalo finds that the institutional development of the parliament, which established specialized committees and procedures to deal with

the EU accession process and to be able to cope with the government, was not supplemented by an adequate upgrading of substantial capacities. Thus the activities of the members of parliament in fact lag behind the requirements of the accession process and have not yet prepared the Croatian parliament for the demanding tasks of its future role after Croatia becomes a member state.

Berto Šalaj, assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, discusses the quality of social capital in Croatia based on empirical data gathered from 1995 to 2007. After showing how widely accepted definitions of social capital include structural and cultural dimensions, i. e. participation in social networks of voluntary associations and generalized trust in people, Šalaj analyzes the empirical data concerning levels of social capital among Croatian voters. Although Croatia fits into the group of East European democracies with low levels of social capital, there is a clear distinction between medium level of par-

ticipation in social networks and very low level of trust, where Croatia shares the rear position with Poland and Portugal, having an average level of trust of 15-16%. A peculiarity of the Croatian associational life should also be mentioned: while generally participation in associations has a positive impact on the level of trust, two types of associations show a negative correlation: trade unions and veterans associations. We must agree with the author that these findings deserve further research.

In conclusion, it should be said that the editor and the authors deserve praise for producing a well-informed and balanced volume which describes the connection between Croatian party programmes and different policies. The volume will certainly be interesting not only for political scientist, but for all academic scholars in Croatia and abroad.

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